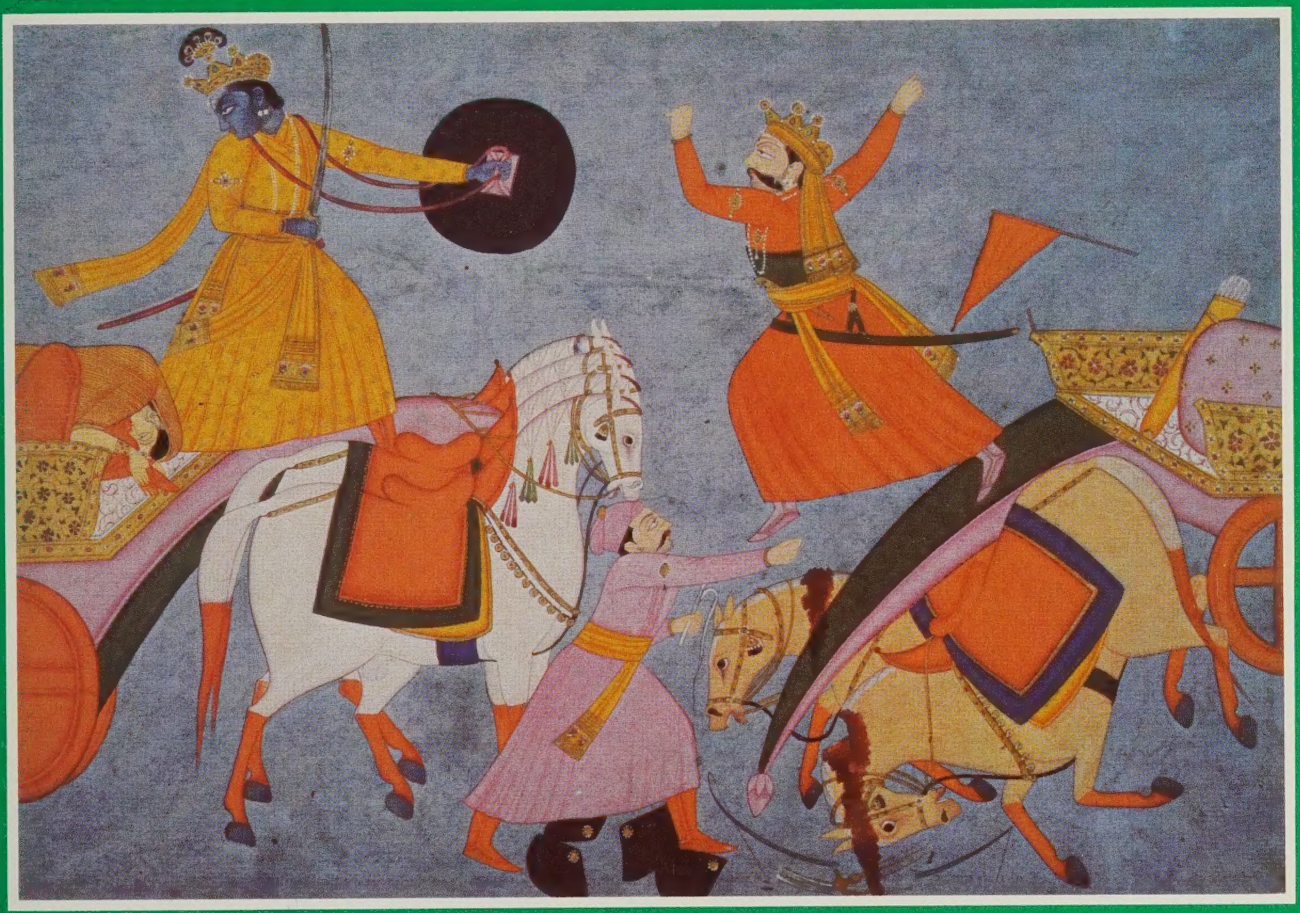
Reflections of India

Paintings from the 16th to the 19th Century

Milo C. Beach



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Cover: **Krishna in Battle** (see No. 6, page 14).

Preface

This catalogue accompanies an exhibition to be mounted first at the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto and then circulated to various centres in Canada to mark the tenth anniversary of the Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute. The Shastri Institute was established in 1968 with the joint support of the governments of India and Canada. Named in honour of Lal Bahadur Shastri, Prime Minister of India from 1964 to 1966, the Institute is only a decade old, but it has already done much to further the development of Indian studies in Canada. Its fellowship programme has enabled junior and senior scholars to carry out language training and research in India. Programmes in Canada have provided teachers with courses on Indian culture and languages, thus bringing the riches of India's past and the challenges of its present within the reach of Canada's young students. Grants to university libraries in Canada for the purchase of Indian publications represent another important means of promoting knowledge of India.

The West has a long history of interest in India. Except for those adventurous travellers whose journeys brought them into direct contact with the Indian way of life, however, the Western world thought of India primarily as a land of material riches—exotic spices, gems, and luxury textiles. India's interest in the West also has a lengthy history, going back to a time long before India became the "Jewel of the British Empire" in 1858. Indian culture selectively assimilated foreign modes, from the technology of firearms to the technique of painting. In the earliest periods represented by these paintings, the European presence is already apparent. Ambassadors and merchants brought European paintings and engravings to India. Such paintings as "The Judgement of Paris" (No. 30) show that Indian artists

appreciated European techniques and could imitate them well. Yet they did not let European influence dominate their craft. Well into the present century Indian painters continued to produce fine depictions of Indian life in a traditional style.

More recently India's wealth of spiritual and philosophical ideas has found a welcome in the West. The arts of India are also becoming a source of enjoyment and delight to the West, and with this exhibition it is hoped that further aspects of Indian culture will come to the fore, perhaps some that can be seen only through the eyes of the artist.

In preparing this exhibition and its catalogue, the Royal Ontario Museum has been most fortunate to obtain the services of Dr. Milo Beach, Associate Professor, Department of Art, Williams College, Williamstown, Massachusetts. His appreciation of Indian culture as reflected in this catalogue makes it a fitting tribute to the work of the Shastri Institute.

Lisa Golombek
West Asian Department
Royal Ontario Museum

Detail of **The Infant Krishna on a Swing** (see No. 4, page 13).

2 Kamsa Discovers Devaki's Daughter (see page 12).

HINDU KUSH RANGE
KASHMIR
TIBET
Chamba
Basohli
Kangra
HIMALAYAS
PUNJAB
Multan
INDUS R.
Bikaner
Delhi
GANGES R.
OUDH
RAJASTHAN
Lucknow
Agra
Jaipur
BIHAR
MARWAR
Kota
Sirohi
MEWAR
MALWA
BENGAL
GUJERAT
Calcutta
GONDWANA
BERAR
DECCAN
AHMEDNAGAR
GOLCONDA
BIDAR
Bijapur
BIJAPUR
Boundary of the Mughal Empire at the death of Akbar (A.D. 1605)
Boundaries of Deccani Sultanates
INDIA

Introduction

India, between the early 16th and the 19th century—the time spanned by the present exhibition—was dominated culturally and politically by the Mughal dynasty. According to bloodlines, these rulers were Mongol and Turkic, descendants of Genghiz Khan and Tamerlane. Artistically, however, their affiliation was initially Iranian (Persian). The Mughals were foreigners to India, arriving only in 1526, and being Muslim they had little in common with the predominant Hinduism of the subcontinent. They were responsible for an extraordinarily intense patronage of the arts, however, and their background led them to commission small and technically immaculate works made with opulent materials: manuscript illustrations (several are exhibited here), textiles, jade and rock crystal carvings, jewellery, and elaborate weapons are characteristic Mughal types of object.

When the Mughals arrived, India, at least in the northwest, was ruled by Rajputs, Hindu rulers with titles such as *maharaja* or *maharao*, and these men controlled the separate, small kingdoms (for example, Bikaner, Jaipur, Kota) into which most of northern India was fragmented. An absence of political centrality made it possible for the invading Mughals to take control of the north quickly and easily. Some Rajput states (such as Bikaner) then allied themselves so closely with the Mughal court that their Hindu artistic identity was largely submerged. Others (Kota, for example) retained their traditional character, which was shared with Indian village or folk cultures. In fact, the earliest pre-Mughal Rajput paintings (No. 1 is an excellent example) are only slightly more elaborate than works made for folk use (No. 35). Mughal cultural impact introduced new subjects and a naturalistic style novel—in fact, antithetical—to the arts of Hindu India, but it also created a style that had no links

with folk-level sensibilities or interests. And its elitism and isolation were responsible for its decline.

A comparison of the subject matter in Mughal and Rajput (Muslim and Hindu) works in India provides an excellent introduction to the paintings. Hindu works, before the Mughals arrived, were devoted to explicitly religious and poetical texts. Particularly popular were the series from the life of Krishna, a form of Vishnu (the God of Preservation), sent to rid the world of demonic forces. He is presented first as an extraordinarily lively and impish child, a testament to human vitality and life, and then as the most enticing of human lovers, the creative principle incarnate. His cult is the result of devotional (or *bhakti)* reforms in Hinduism. In these, priests and rituals were set aside for experiences of direct encounter between worshipper and god. Poetic texts in local dialects were produced, as well as pictorial images in which the god is shown as an active participant in the immediate, day-to-day physical world.

An especially important image of Krishna shows him fluting (No. 5), and this episode finds frequent poetic expression as well. The flute is a metaphor for the call of the divine, and when the women of Krishna's village hear him playing, they forsake their responsibilities and go to him. In poetry and frequently in paintings, the scene is evoked in lush, sensuous imagery. Yet because the worshipper realizes that Krishna is the subject, he does not respond at the purely mundane level, thinking that human passion alone is being celebrated.

Hindu painting uses at length the metaphor of human love to represent the soul's longing for the divine, whether this be visualized as Krishna, or Shiva, or simply the Universal Lover. In these scenes, however, expressions are inevitably serene and uninvolved. Hinduism, in fact, teaches that one should never become involved in the results of actions, for this would be a manifestation of desire and of a sense of individual separateness. Hindu arts seek to convey the unity or oneness of all existence, for the seemingly separate forms of the world are, in fact, mere aspects of one substance, divinity itself. Artists therefore present what is most universal within actions or personalities, and figures are painted in general, not specific, terms. Consequently, portraits and scenes of actual historical events never became important in India until the Mughals introduced the concept and, because of their political superiority, made it fashionable.

Mughal painting, on the other hand, was particularly concerned with using art to record events (No. 18 and 19 especially) and explore personalities. The Emperors wrote memoirs that were reproduced by scribes and lavishly illustrated. They also commissioned portraits of leading nobles, which they would study in order to gain insight into their characters. A new attitude within India, this had a well-articulated but brief life. The central imperial Mughal court, from the later 17th century, became increasingly isolated and its hold over the country grew politically weaker; outlying regions, once ruled by governors directly controlled by the Emperor, broke off into separate kingdoms (Lucknow, or Oudh, for example; see No. 27 and 28). These new rulers were often less inhibited and isolated than the Emperors, and they were open to Hindu influences in ways the imperial court was not. Consequently, new and sometimes vital styles of painting evolved. In general terms, however, these Hinduized Mughal schools are indistinguishable from the Mughalized Rajput schools. In both cases, subjects and styles have become extensively interdependent.

Mughal and Rajput paintings share a common basic technique. Compositions are carefully worked out and pigments are applied only when the placement of every form has been decided. This is one reason that sketches sometimes have more interest and vitality than finished works. The pigments, usually bound with gum arabic, are natural: indigo and lapis lazuli, for example, or a yellow made from cow's urine. The finest colours and papers were usually imported, but appreciation of the fineness of materials accompanied Mughal influence, and was not important earlier. Unpainted papers and finished paintings were usually burnished with a smooth agate to create lustrous, opulent effects.

Mughal India, which gave us the Taj Mahal, a splendid tomb befitting the queen of Shah Jahan (1628-57), now exists only in ruins, though the ruins remain magnificent and evocative. Rajput culture, however, is intact, even if not artistically active. In less travelled areas of Rajasthan, one still sees women dressed as they would have been in the 18th century, and on ceremonial occasions the former *rajas* still appear in traditional dress. And, of course, village India in many instances continues untouched by the 20th century. These paintings, then, are by no means simply remnants of a vanished world; the world they portray lives on in many of the attitudes which have remained active up to the present day. The paintings allow us to bridge the past and the present.

9 The Battle of Arjuna and Kripa (see page 17).

Catalogue

1. Krishna the Cowherd

From a **Bhagavata Purana** series
Rajput, probably from southern Rajasthan, ca 1520
18.3 cm x 23.8 cm; painting 16.0 cm x 22.9 cm

973.150.1

Among the favourite texts for illustration at Hindu courts was the *Bhagavata Purana*, a mythological life of the god Vishnu. His incarnation as Krishna, a mischievous cowherd and later the supreme lover, was particularly popular, for it showed the divine to be immediately accessible, manifested in daily life and human emotions.

Krishna (literally "dark") is usually shown blue. There is no single satisfactory explanation for this practice, but it is usually explained by reference to his relationship to Vishnu, a god associated with the sky. A more likely justification would probably be to associate it with the historical, mortal source for Krishna, since the god seems to be a divinized form of a mortal hero. Here the god is shown with his twin brother and complementary aspect, Balarama, who is white.

Before the Muslim Mughals arrived in India, Hindu or Rajput painting was exclusively poetic or religious in subject matter. Marked by strong flat colours placed edge to edge, bold forms, and often rough execution, the paintings were instantaneous and vivid in impact, and had more in common with Indian folk traditions than with the sophistication and subtlety of mature Mughal works.

1

2. Kamsa Discovers Devaki's Daughter

From a **Bhagavata Purana** series
Rajput, western Rajasthan, late 17th century
23.0 cm x 26.1 cm; painting 18.7 cm x 22.0 cm
973.150.4

Vishnu was incarnated as Krishna to rid the world of a tyrannical and demonic king, Kamsa. It had been predicted—correctly, as we eventually learn—that a son of Kamsa's cousin Devaki (literally "of the god") would kill him, and so her male children were destroyed as soon as they were born. The eighth son, Krishna, however, was miraculously smuggled to a nearby village and given to Yasoda, a woman whose newborn daughter was then claimed to be Devaki's expected child. In this scene Kamsa, on the balcony of his palace, is shown Devaki's new daughter.

See page 5.

3. Balarama Presents a Lotus to Krishna

Rajput, southern Rajasthan, late 18th century
27.9 cm x 19.8 cm; painting 24.5 cm x 16.3 cm
971.281.2

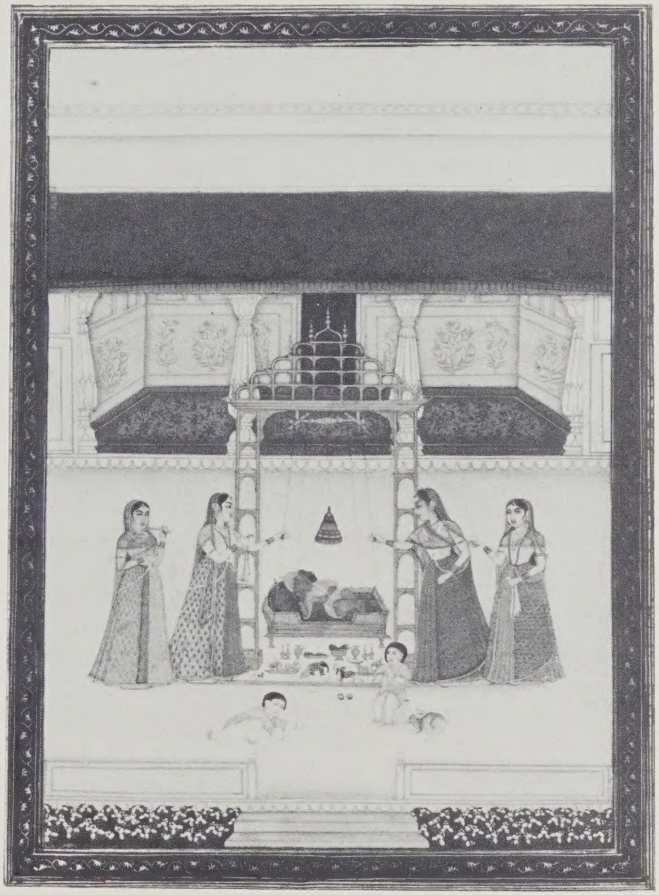
Krishna and Balarama, whom we see together in "Krishna the Cowherd" (No. 1) as well, were brothers born of Devaki and Rohini, two wives of Vasudeva, whose wombs had each been fertilized by a hair (one black and one white) from the god Vishnu. The several incarnations of Vishnu probably represent absorptions into Hinduism at various times of localized cults of "divine" heroes. The sky chariot at the top is that of Chandra, the Moon God.

4. The Infant Krishna on a Swing

Rajput, Rajasthan at Jaipur, early 19th century
38.2 cm x 27.3 cm; painting 27.6 cm x 19.2 cm
923.4.80

Krishna, as a child, is presented as if he were the most mischievous of human children, and Hindu parents delight in the antics of children, seeing in them a metaphor of the god's activity. This can be carried further because, in fact, every aspect of the world is a metaphor of the divine. There is no separation of sacred and secular. In scenes of Krishna as a child or as a lover, therefore, we react in very human terms; but by understanding the protagonist to be the god and not a "mere" mortal, we are kept from involvement at a specific or mundane level. Until the Mughals arrived in India, painting never treated historical events or specific human personalities, for this would have been to emphasize involvement with the physical world. The Hindu sought release instead.

Here the young Krishna, surrounded by bowls of fruit, ewers, and toys, is being pushed on a swing. Both this scene and the next, "Krishna Fluting" (No. 5), are rather formal depictions, unlike "Krishna the Cowherd" (No. 1) in which we become far more involved in action. It is possible that these two works were used as images in a shrine.



4 See detail on page 4.

5. Krishna Fluting

Rajput, Rajasthan at Jaipur, early 19th century
38.2 cm x 27.3 cm; painting 25.1 cm x 21.8 cm
923.4.81

The older Krishna is the archetypal lover. Luring the *gopis*, the women of the village, away from their homes and families by the mesmerizing sound of his flute, he sports with them on the banks of the Jumna River. Were it taken literally, this would be unthinkable social behaviour, and the Hindu understands it to be a reference to the human worshipper's need to abandon all worldly ties in his quest for unity with the divine.

There are many separate Hindu kingdoms in northwestern India, of which Jaipur—known to almost every tourist on the subcontinent—long remained the most powerful. Several of these states developed distinctive and recognizable schools of painting. This work and the preceding one, "The Infant Krishna on a Swing" (No. 4), seem to be by the same artist, for such devices as the band of flowers at the bottom of both are extraordinarily similar.

6. Krishna in Battle

Probably from a **Bhagavata Purana** series
Rajput, Punjab Hills, ca 1760
21.6 cm x 28.8 cm; painting 17.5 cm x 25.2 cm
970.383.6

The scene is very similar to that of "The Battle of Arjuna and Kripa" (No. 9), yet the effect is totally different. The background here is a flat plane of colour and the forms are arranged as a striking surface pattern. There is nothing extraneous, and the story—even if we do not know its details—is instantly clear, our sense of action being even more vivid than in the Mughal comparison cited. This boldness and immediacy, and the absence of purely aesthetic refinements, are a Rajput attitude that few Rajput courts retained during the massive onslaught of Mughal cultural influence.

See cover.

7. Kripa in Battle

7

From a **Razm-nama** manuscript
By Husain Ali, the son of Qabul
Mughal, dated 1598
27.3 cm x 16.6 cm; painting 20.0 cm x 13.4 cm
923.4.82

In the late 16th century, the Mughal Emperor Akbar (1556-1605) commissioned translations into Persian—the Mughal court language—of major Hindu texts, for he was extraordinarily interested in the country his family had claimed and adopted and was by nature liberal and intellectually curious. Copies of these works were then made for the imperial library, and for major Mughal nobles. These books were often profusely illustrated. The *Razm-nama* is a translation into Persian of the great Indian (Hindu) epic the *Mahabharata*. This *Razm-nama* is a simplified version of the imperial manuscript, for the paintings have rather basic compositions, and the workmanship lacks the technical sophistication and artistic inventiveness of Akbar's copy (a manuscript now in the Maharaja Sawai Man Singh City Palace Museum, Jaipur). Nonetheless, the subdued colours and interest in modelling, landscape, and space make this Mughal work quite distinct from such a purely Hindu painting as "Krishna the Cowherd" (No. 1). The history of painting in India after the mid-16th century is a study of the cross-fertilization of these two artistic traditions.

8. Prince Puru Enthroned by his Father Yajati

From a **Razm-nama** manuscript
By Bhawani
Mughal, dated 1598
25.5 cm x 14.5 cm; painting 19.8 cm x 10.1 cm
923.4.83

The text of the *Razm-nama* is long and complicated, and centres on the battles and rivalry of cousins, the Kauravas and Pandavas. Both groups looked to Puru, an ancient king, as a common ancestor, and the scene shown here illustrates Puru's rise to power. While the episode is set in antiquity, the painter presents it as if it were a contemporary Mughal court. Both king and attendants are in late 16th-century costume, with knee-length coats *(jamas)* over trousers cut tight at the ankles (known as *paijamas*, these inspired the European invention of pyjamas). Furthermore, daggers are tucked into sashes. These are almost always placed on the side of the figure facing the viewer, not as they would actually have been worn. This is a clear manipulation of reality for the sake of visual clarity, as is the overall space, with its bird's-eye views of tile and textile patterns. The man at the left holds a bag in which swords were kept.

The Persian inscription at the bottom identifies the episode, and a librarian's notation records the name of the painter: Bhawani, a minor artist better known as the father of one of the greatest of Mughal imperial painters, Govardhan. The manuscript was not made for the Emperor himself, but for one of the Mughal nobles.

8

9. The Battle of Arjuna and Kripa

From a **Razm-nama** manuscript
By Bahar
Mughal, dated 1598
30.2 cm x 16.3 cm; painting 22.8 cm x 13.9 cm
924. 12.142

Arjuna is the chief Pandava warrior, and he eventually allies himself with Krishna, who serves as his charioteer. Their discourse (known as the *Bhagavad Gita)* before the major battle is one of the most famous and influential of Hindu texts; it argues, among other things, for complete uninvolvement with the fruits of action, a basic Hindu attitude which testifies to freedom from desire.

The scene shown here is the battle between Arjuna and the Kaurava Kripa. The corresponding passage of text reads:

> Meanwhile mettlesome Kripa, best of the bearers of arms, of great bravery and prowess, advanced; the great warrior was eager to do battle with Arjuna. The two powerful, sunlike warriors who were about to fight appeared, as they took up their positions, like two clouds in autumn . . . heroic Arjuna pierced Kripa's four horses rapidly with four sharp, smoothed, golden-necked and superior arrows . . . All the horses, hit with the sharp shafts like flaming serpents, reared up violently, so that Kripa lost his balance. (J.A.B. van Buitenen, *Mahabharata*)

As did the artist of "Prince Puru Enthroned by his Father Yajati" (No. 8), the painter here has taken liberties with visual or textual reality—by having two, not four, horses pull the chariot, an elimination for visual simplicity.

See page 9.

10. a) Shumbha Defeated by Durga
b) The Goddess Durga

From a **Markandeya Purana** series
Rajput, Rajasthan, Sirohi area, early 18th century
a) 12.9 cm x 20.7 cm; painting 12.9 cm x 15.4 cm
b) 12.7 cm x 20.7 cm; painting 12.7 cm x 15.9 cm
971.281.5 and 971.281.6

As related in the *Devimahatmya* section of the *Markandeya Purana*, the demonic brothers Shumbha and Nishumbha were ravaging the world and threatening the power of the gods. The Supreme Goddess was therefore invoked for help, but Shumbha was so affected by her beauty that he tried to seize her. She naturally refused his advances, but she promised to become his if he could defeat her in battle. This is the scene depicted in the first image and, of course, the goddess, shown in her form as Durga, was victorious. In the second image, Durga is depicted riding on her tiger, and in her ten arms are held attributes given her by the most powerful of the male gods—Shiva's trident, for example, and Vishnu's conch shell.

11. Ragini Bangala

From a **Ragamala** series
Rajput, mid-18th century
30.7 cm x 23.2 cm; painting 26.7 cm x 19.4 cm
971.281.1

11

A *Ragamala* (literally "garland of *ragas*") is a series of paintings (usually 36) which catalogues possible stages in the awareness by the human worshipper of the divine, presented in terms of a woman (the *ragini)* and her lover (the *raga).* This is a usual mystic metaphor and the basis for most of the imagery of the Hindu works exhibited here. In this work, the *ragini* is seated before a shrine, paying homage to an emblem of her lord.

In Europe and America, *ragas* are perhaps most familiar in their musical form. There is a set sequence of notes and intervals (similar to the modes of the Middle Ages), each having a distinct character, which is associated with certain moods and times of day. In painting, the composition and colours are predetermined and remain consistent over long periods of time. The effect of the works is due to interpretation and aesthetic judgement, not to innovations of style or subject matter. As has often been remarked, such paintings—to borrow an analogy from music—are a performer's, not a composer's, art.

12. Ragini Asavari

From a **Ragamala** series
Possibly Rajput, late 18th century
19.2 cm x 11.7 cm; painting 19.2 cm x 11.7 cm
971.281.9

The scene is of a woman who has withdrawn to the mountains to perform ascetic penances as a way of becoming worthy of her lord. In this late painting of uncertain provenance, the writhing and coiling of the snakes is seen as mirroring the emotional turmoil of the woman.

13. A Raga

From a **Ragamala** series
Rajput, Punjab Hills, perhaps at Chamba, ca 1710
Painting 21.6 cm x 21.0 cm
Lent by Charles Green
Courtesy Yarlow-Salzman Gallery

The iconography of a prince seated between two white cranes is uncertain but may illustrate Lalit, the son of Raga Bhairava.

14. Ragini Malasri

From a **Ragamala** series
Rajput, Rajasthan, probably at Sirohi, ca 1680
Painting 21.0 cm x 15.0 cm
Lent by Charles Green
Courtesy Yarlow-Salzman Gallery

The seated women are counting lotus petals—apparently a form of "he loves me, he loves me not"—while awaiting the arrival of a lover.

The traditional forms of Rajput painting were made by artists who simply copied preordained compositons and colours (see "Ragini Bangala", No. 11). This drawing, called a *namoona*, provides such a model, and was meant simply to be an artist's aid; it was never intended to leave the painter's workshop, being as essential to his methods as brush and pigments. The composition seen here would be traced and transferred to the paper on which the final painting was to be made. Colours would then be filled in according to the key given, for the various letter notations (in *devanagari* script) are colour guides.

15. Illuminated Chapter Heading

From a **Shah-nama** manuscript
Mughal, ca 1630
Painting 27.9 cm x 15.9 cm
977.131.1

The *Shah-nama*, or "Book of Kings", composed by the poet Firdausi in the 10th century, is a largely legendary history of Iran and the most famous of Iranian texts. Title pages, chapter headings, and margins were often sumptuously illuminated. "Rustam Lifts the Rock" (No. 16) is from the same manuscript.

See detail on page 40.

16. Rustam Lifts the Rock

16

From a **Shah-nama** manuscript
Mughal, ca 1630
27.8 cm x 16.2 cm; painting 18.5 cm x 10.6 cm
977.131.2

The style of this manuscript, with its flat, decorative background and faces in three-quarter profile (a trait of Muslim and Persian, rather than Hindu, origin) has its source in several sub-imperial manuscripts of the early 17th century. The somewhat less smooth modelling here, and the rougher execution, suggest that this might not be so early in date, however. The famous hero Rustam struggles to lift the colossal stone from the well into which Bizhan was thrown by the evil Div Akhwan.

17. The Throne of God

17

From a Persian manuscript of al-Qazvini,
Aja'ib al-Makhluqat
"Wonders of Creation"
Written by Chun Qurayshi Multani
Multan, Mughal, dated 22 Ramadan 1084 (2 January 1674)
27.7 cm x 16.0 cm; painting 10.3 cm x 9.9 cm
975.267.1

Worldwide trade, conducted by Arab and Persian merchants, encouraged the growth of an extensive literature on geography. This tended to combine real observation with theoretical notions about the universe, derived from Greek sources. To these were added the many tales of far-off places, the dangers of the sea, and the fabulous beasts and humanoid creatures that inhabited lesser known parts of the world. The "Cosmography" is a geography of both the earth and the heavens. One popular version was composed in Arabic by Zakariya b. Muhammad al-Qazvini (1203-83), and was translated into Persian and Turkish. The colourful scene illustrated here shows the Muslim conception of the Throne of God, carried by four angels in the form of a man, a bull, a lion, and a bird. Another scene in this manuscript is an imaginary depiction of the Colossus on the island of Rhodes in the Mediterranean Sea, looking more like the famous gold idol of the calligrapher's home, Multan, than a Greek statue.

18. Babur Receives Jahangir Mirza in the Hammam of Akhsi

From a **Babur-nama** manuscript
Mughal, ca 1590
43.1 cm x 28.2 cm; painting 29.0 cm x 16.1 cm
Gift of Mr. Frank D. Lee in memory of Winifred Alice Jane Lee

976.306.1

18

In this illustration of an historical event, Babur (1526-30), the first of the Mughal Emperors, greets his brother Jahangir Mirza in the *hammam* (baths) at Akhsi, a territory in eastern Iran that would eventually be given to this brother to govern. Babur found the region a delight. "Its melons are excellent," he wrote in a typical passage of his memoirs, the *Babur-nama*. "The melons of Bukhara are famous . . . I had some cut up at an entertainment and nothing from Bukhara compared with those of Akhsi. The fowling and hunting of Akhsi are very good indeed . . ." (Babur, *Babur-nama*)

This page and the next (No. 19) are from a *Babur-nama* manuscript of which the greater portion is in the British Museum. The illustrations have been set into borders of a type found first in the albums formed by the Emperor Shah Jahan, and distinguished by extraordinary, but very formal, floral motifs. Because Mughal paintings were book or album illustrations, viewing them necessarily involved physical wear and tear. Surfaces were therefore often reworked, a condition we see in both *Babur-nama* pages exhibited here.

19. Babur Receives the Notables of Samarkand after the Second Capture of the City

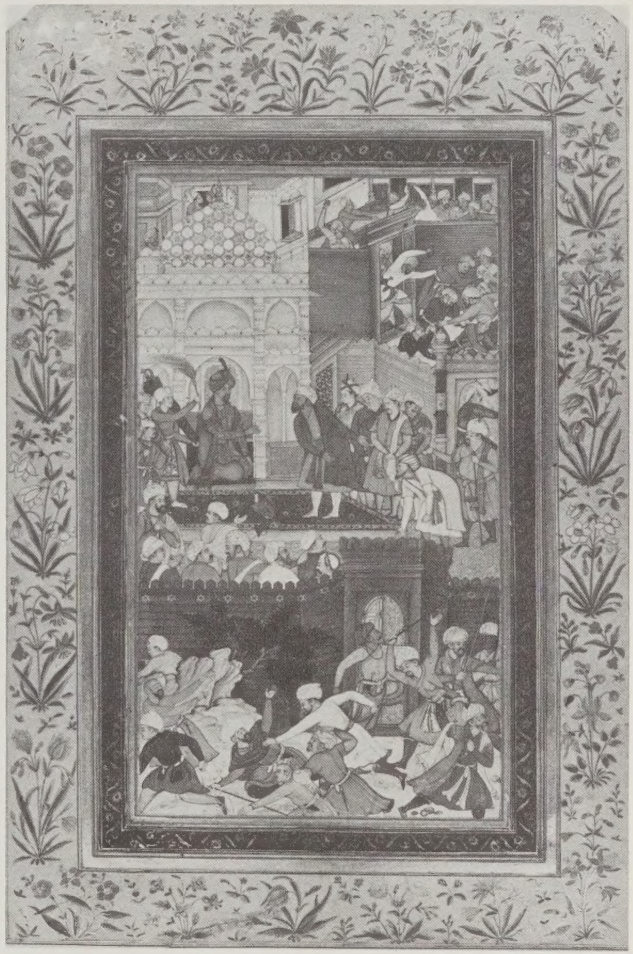
From a **Babur-nama** manuscript
Mughal, ca 1590
43.0 cm x 27.7 cm; painting 28.1 cm x 16.2 cm
Gift of Mr. Frank D. Lee in memory of Winifred Alice Jane Lee

976.306.2

Before his final descent into India in 1526 and the subsequent establishment of a ruling Mughal dynasty there, Babur attempted to increase his strength in his homeland of Ferghana (in eastern Iran) by the capture of the nearby and fabled city of Samarkand. He won and lost the city three times, and eventually he was ousted from Ferghana, necessitating a move south into India. Here he meets with the nobles of the city, while the battle still rages outside the gates of his palace.

See detail on page 39.

19



20. A Raja Receiving Homage

Rajput, Rajasthan at Kota, ca 1750
24.4 cm x 19.8 cm; painting 21.8 cm x 18.0 cm
969.267.3

At Mughal courts—and eventually at Rajput courts—painters were called upon to record notable events and familiar scenes, and many works therefore show the presentation of gifts, as in this painting, or the reception of visiting emissaries, as in the preceding one (No. 19). A basic compositional formula evolved, which was frequently repeated: it showed both the interior palace reception hall and the exterior walls and gateways. This formula is seen both in this work and in the *Babur-nama* pages (No. 18 and 19).

The adoption of Mughal subject matter at Rajput courts, which we see here, did not necessarily mean that Mughal style, too, was followed. In this work, the figures seem types and are not individually differentiated; and the colours and rhythms are far stronger—and rougher—than Mughal patrons of the time would have tolerated.

20

21. Portrait of a Ruler

Rajput, Punjab Hills, perhaps at Basohli, ca 1700
Painting 20.7 cm x 15.2 cm
Lent by Charles Green
Courtesy Yarlow-Salzman Gallery

The man is seated at an open window, which is draped with a rug, and this is a stock compositional formula. Both Rajput and Mughal portraits are generally in profile. This may be because the profile view allows the most characteristic aspects of the faces to be most emphatic, but it also gives the shapes a boldness and vividness that appealed to the Indian artists' and patrons' delight in strong, immediately legible form.

21

22

22. A Prince with Ladies on a Terrace

Rajput, Rajasthan at Bikaner, ca 1760
20.6 cm x 13.7 cm; painting 20.1 cm x 13.2 cm
924.12.145

A Rajput prince is receiving a cup of wine from the ladies of his harem. Such purely secular subject matter was introduced to Rajput courts by the Mughals, as were the careful, relatively naturalistic execution, the atmospheric effects (such as the distant moonlit buildings), and the rather languid mood. In fact, it is not the style or subject but only the clothing and recognizably Bikaneri origin that allow us to identify this work as Rajput. Not all Hindu courts accepted Mughal influence to an equal degree, however, as is shown by a comparison of this scene with the almost contemporary illustration from Kota (No. 20).

With this illustration, one gets a sense of the importance that fashion held at Mughal and Mughalized Rajput courts. The cut of a skirt, the length of a sash, or the patterns woven into fabrics were immediate visible evidence that one was (or was not) up to date. Furthermore, personal ornamentation was lavish. Rulers and nobility wore considerable amounts of jewellery and ornamented weapons; here the prince has a dagger *(katar)* in his sash *(kamarband*, the origin of the word cummerbund). The women, clothed in the sheerest of fabrics, wear anklets, bracelets, armlets, necklaces, and jewels in the parting of the hair. The lady in the following painting (No. 23) is even more elaborately adorned.

23. Lady with a Rosewater Sprinkler

Rajput, Rajasthan at Jaipur, early 19th century
29.0 cm x 19.4 cm; painting 21.3 cm x 13.3 cm
925.82.1

Bottles of fragrant rosewater were often carried to help sweeten the air, just as fountains and waterways within the palace complex were sometimes perfumed.

24. Lady Listening to a Musician

Probably Rajput, ca 1780
29.3 cm x 21.2 cm; painting 18.6 cm x 12.4 cm
Gift of Miss Dorothy Holliday
965.67.1

Paintings, musicians, storytellers—and, perhaps most importantly, gossip—were the chief entertainments of the ladies of the harem, who were kept strictly secluded in their own palace quarters, guarded by amazonian females and eunuchs. The only men they might see were certain close members of their immediate families. Paintings that are actual portraits of either Mughal or Rajput court ladies, therefore, are virtually unknown, and the women in paintings are most often either stock types or imaginary personalities. Here a noblewoman is listening to a singer, who accompanies herself on a drone instrument, while an attendant stirs the air with a yak- (or perhaps horse-) tail whisk.

25. Lady on a Terrace

Probably Mughal, late 18th century
37.8 cm x 26.0 cm; painting 22.9 cm x 14.7 cm
920.83.1

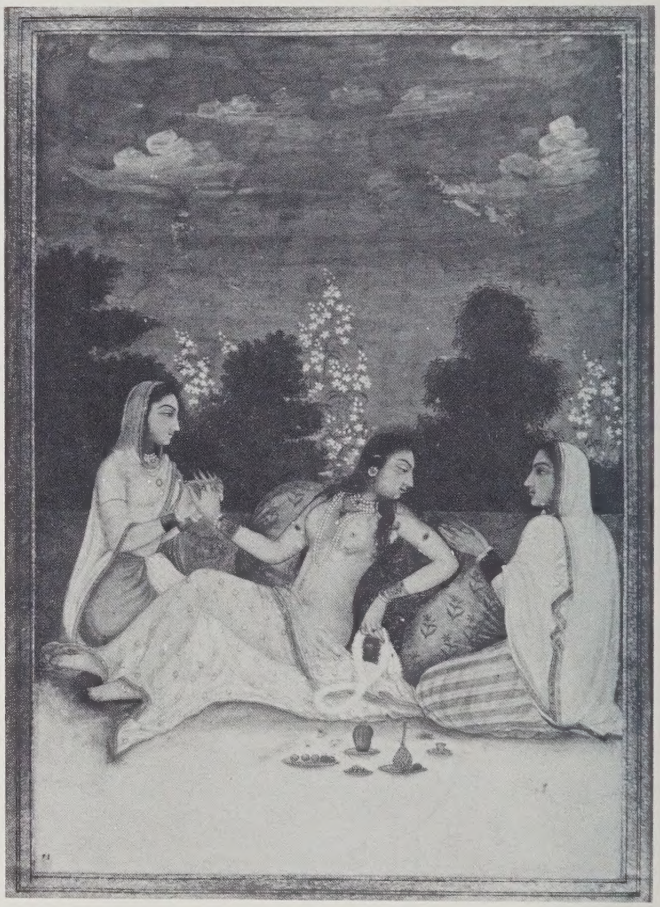
The seclusion of the harem, the absence of male company, and the often infrequent visits of husbands—who usually had one or two chief wives and dozens or even hundreds of minor consorts, some of whom might literally never see him privately—must have made the romantic and erotic atmosphere of Krishna and other devotional poetry and paintings particularly meaningful. Here one attendant hands a cup of wine to a woman, while another servant massages her hand.

26. Couple on a Terrace

Mughal, ca 1760
37.9 cm x 26.0 cm; painting 21.6 cm x 14.3 cm
920.83.3

A young nobleman, surrounded by dishes of fruit, sits against a bolster and is offered a cup of wine by one of his consorts. That he is a Mughal is evident because his coat *(jama)* is tied under his right arm; Rajputs usually fastened coats towards the left, as we see in "A Raja Receiving Homage" (No. 20).

25



Inscription
Bandah-i Muḥammad Nāmdār Mīr Dhū ᶜĀlam Ḥājjī 'l-Ḥaramayn Muḥammad Ḥusayn dar Awadh (Oudh or Awda) taḥrīr yāft.

Translation
"The slave of the illustrious Muḥammad, Lord of the Two Worlds, the Pilgrim to the Two Holy Places (i.e. Mecca and Medina), Muḥammad Ḥusayn. (It) was written in Awadh (Oudh or Awda)."

This inscription may identify the subject of the painting and may be a later attribution (read by G.M. Meredith-Owens).

27. Lovers on a Terrace

Mughal, probably at Lucknow, ca 1770
38.9 cm x 26.9 cm; painting 23.0 cm x 15.4 cm
923.4.79

The male figure, while a portrait of a specific nobleman, is presented as if he were Krishna, for he is blue in colour and stands on a lotus (see the Krishna figure in No. 5). Similar allusions to godlike qualities in portraits of important people were frequently made by painters.

28. Lovers by Moonlight

Mughal, probably at Lucknow, ca 1780
37.9 cm x 26.0 cm; painting 21.8 cm x 15.9 cm
920.83.2

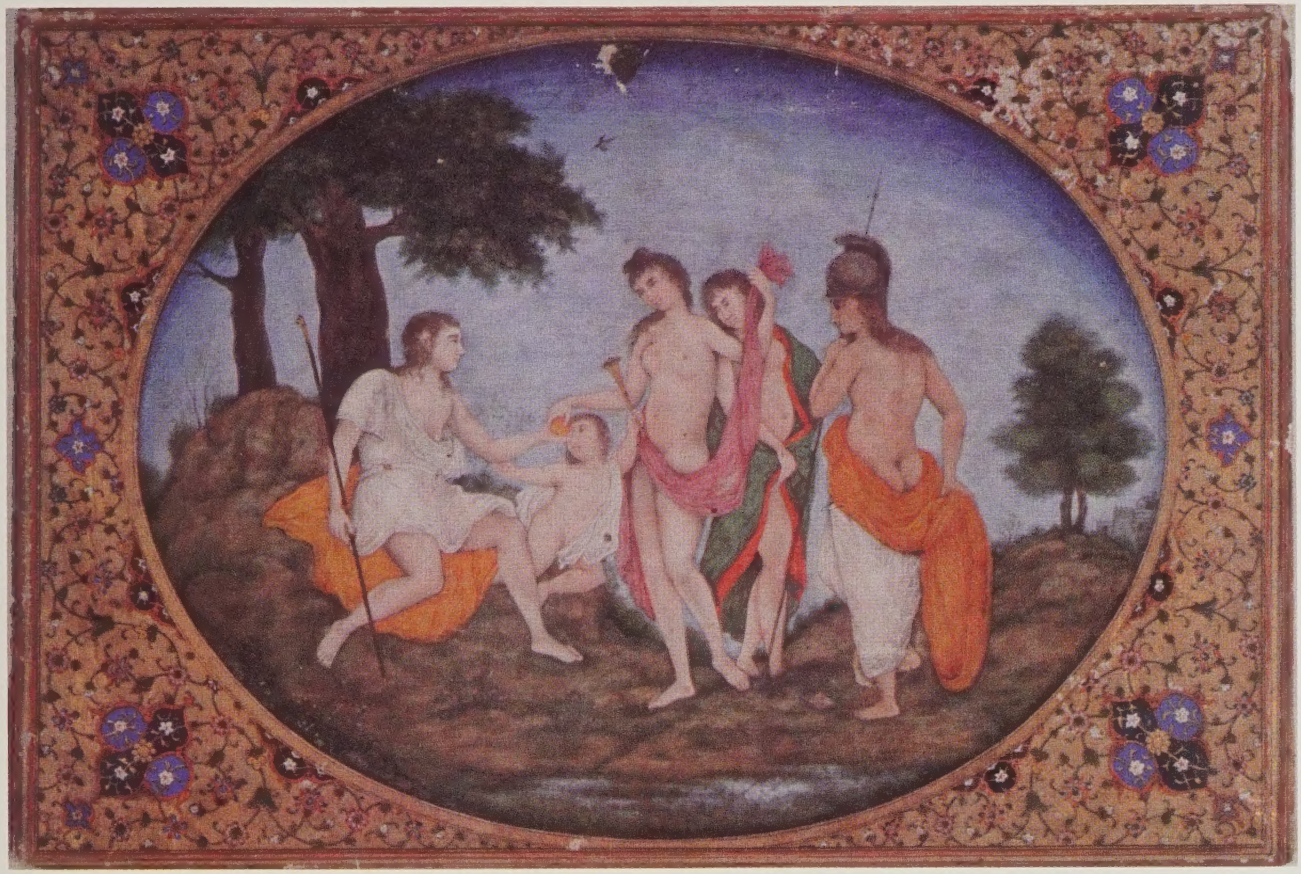
27

29. The Emperor Bahadur Shah

29

Mughal, ca 1850
33.1 cm x 26.8 cm; painting 21.4 cm x 15.0 cm
927.86.2

The last of the Mughal Emperors, Bahadur Shah (1837-57), was a poet and is here shown in the act of writing. He sits on a late replica of the Peacock Throne, the great jewelled seat built by Shah Jahan (1628-58) and in its time the most expensive object in the world. The throne was taken from India in 1739, when Delhi was looted by the Iranian Shah, and some of its jewels are in the present Iranian imperial collection. After the Great Mutiny in 1858, when Bahadur Shah supported native troops against the British, he was exiled to Burma, where he lived his final years.



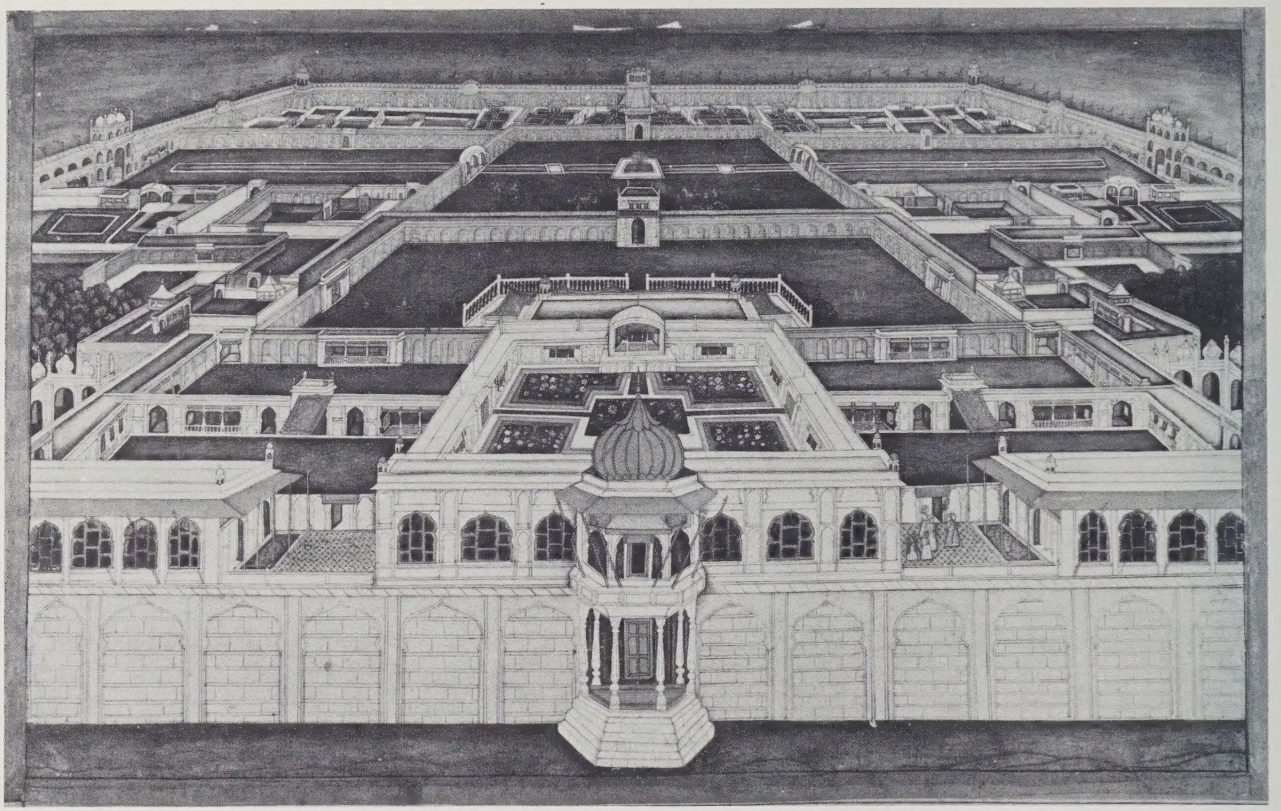
30. The Judgement of Paris

Mughal, mid-19th century
15.7 cm x 23.2 cm; painting 14.4 cm x 18.6 cm
924.12.144

The heroic and beautiful Paris, shown here with Hermes and the three goddesses, Aphrodite, Athene, and Hera, is presented with the golden apple of Zeus and commanded to judge which of the women is most enticing. He chooses Aphrodite, and she leads him into the fateful affair with Helen of Troy.

The myth, like the costumes and elements of the style (for example, shading or postures), is European. Western prints and paintings were known in the Mughal empire from the mid-16th century and were of major inspiration to evolving Mughal artistic attitudes. This scene seems to be a copy or an adaptation of an as yet unidentified European work.

31



31. The Red Fort at Delhi

Mughal, mid-19th century
28.1 cm x 44.9 cm; painting 25.8 cm x 42.8 cm
924.12.143

Of the Mughals, the Emperor Shah Jahan was most interested in architecture and built vast palace complexes in Agra and Delhi, both of which are now major tourist attractions. Such Mughal structures were essentially pavilions set in elaborate formal gardens, and the buildings—most often of white marble and red sandstone—were extensively decorated with inlaid stones and wall-paintings.

In the 19th century, Indian painters often made paintings of interesting buildings or people for resident or visiting Europeans to take home as souvenirs. A number of versions of this composition, probably made for such a purpose, are known. The earliest and best may be one in the India Office Library, London.

32. Patterns for Manuscript Illumination

32

Mughal, 19th century
a) 23.8 cm x 14.7 cm; painting 23.7 cm x 14.7 cm
b) 23.8 cm x 14.7 cm; painting 23.8 cm x 14.7 cm
970.383.4 and 970.383.5

Books were often lavishly ornamented, even when illustrations were not included. Margins and frontispieces were usually decorated with arabesques and floral patterns, and these were executed by a separate group of artists or craftsmen. They would frequently work from pattern books, such as we see here, simply copying established ornaments or motifs. The chapter heading from a *Shah-nama* (No. 15) provides a useful example of illumination using similar motifs.

33. Illuminated Chapter Heading

From a **Diwan** of Sa'adi
Probably Mughal, 18th century
29.1 cm x 14.6 cm; painting 26.1 cm x 13.1 cm
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Gordon Conn

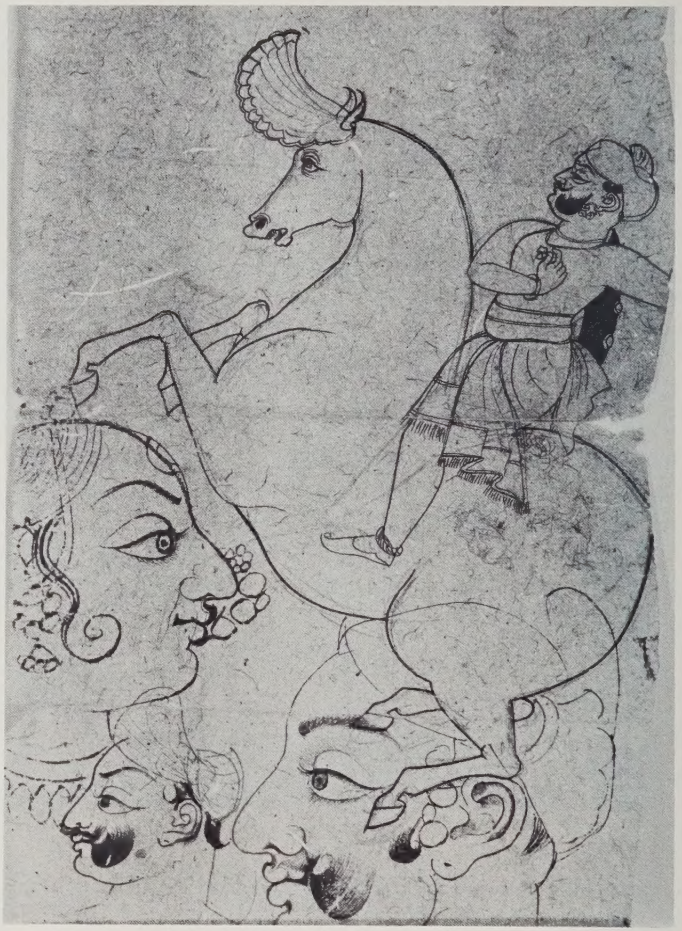
950.119.8

34. An Artist's Worksheet

Rajput, Rajasthan at Kota, ca 1840
Painting 24.5 cm x 16.0 cm
Lent by Charles Green
Courtesy Yarlow-Salzman Gallery

Like the *namoona* from a *Ragamala* (No. 14), this is a sketch made for a painter's use only; but unlike *Ragamalas*, which encouraged minimal artistic initiative, here the artist is experimenting with direct portraits, studies to be incorporated into a finished painting.

34



35. Illustration to an Unidentified Text

Folk, probably in Rajasthan, dated S. 1832 (A.D. 1775)
Painting 41.0 cm x 62.0 cm
Lent by Charles Green
Courtesy Yarlow-Salzman Gallery

While the text of this illustration is not easily decipherable, it shows a seated ruler to whom homage is being paid by several women, whose hands are held in the traditional gesture of greeting. The interest in flat composition, the absence of any illusionistic space or figural modelling, the lively colours, and the two-dimensional interplay of human figures and architectural settings ally this work—and other folk paintings—to the attitudes found in the earliest Rajput paintings (see "Krishna the Cowherd", No. 1). Moreover, there is no interest in elegance, or finesse of line or pattern, or other purely aesthetic considerations. The work is consequently vivid and immediate in impact and can be usefully compared to a Rajput *namoona* drawing (No. 14) with far more controlled, subtle line.

35 Detail of **Illustration to an Unidentified Text**.

36. A Camel

Folk, probably from Rajasthan, dated S. 1801 (A.D. 1744)
Painting 25.1 cm x 22.5 cm
Lent by Charles Green
Courtesy Yarlow-Salzman Gallery

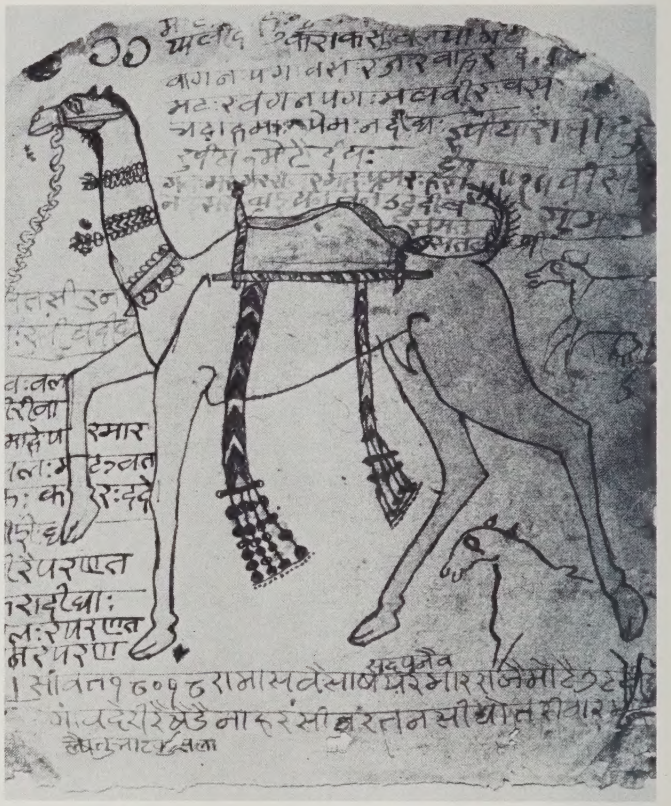
This is a page from a book which seems to describe the attributes of specific animals, perhaps as a guide for purchases or breeding. The lively observation and strong forms are typical of Indian folk traditions, which have remained vital up to the present day.

37. Ganesha

Folk, probably in Rajasthan, 19th century
Painting 50.1 cm x 34.0 cm
Lent by Charles Green
Courtesy Yarlow-Salzman Gallery

Ganesha, a deity with the head of an elephant and the body of a chubby child, is the son of Shiva, the Hindu God of Destruction. Born a normal child, he once challenged his father's power and Shiva, enraged, cut off his head. The repentant god then declared that the boy would live if he took for his own the first head he saw, and this happened to be that of an elephant. The rather elaborate story probably is a justification for a folk-level cult of elephant worship to be absorbed into Hinduism.

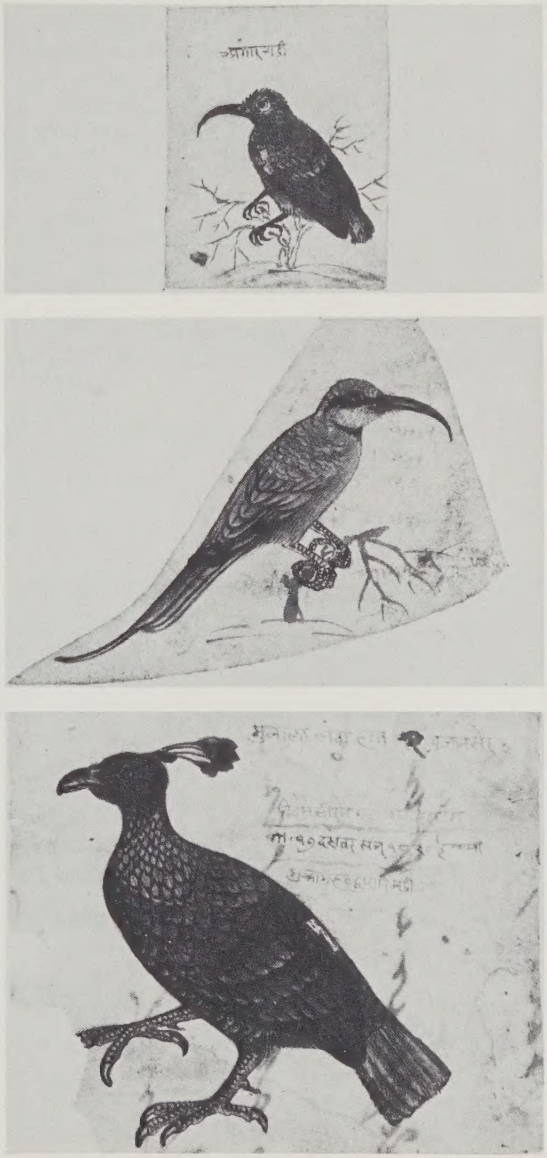
This drawing was presumably intended to be a *yantra*, a focus for meditation and an aid to the worshipper in his search for identification between himself and the god.



38. Seven Birds

Indian, 19th century
30.3 cm x 21.8 cm; painting 20.8 cm x 16.0 cm
970.383.3

These six separate sketches, mounted together here, were quick, preliminary studies of various types of birds. Probably meant for eventual elaboration and inclusion in an album, it is the sort of work from which either late Mughal or Rajput illustrations might be derived, or even the natural history subjects encouraged by the British. English travellers and residents were particularly eager to take back images of the curiosa they encountered in India, and with the decline of Mughal and Rajput patronage in the 19th century, Indian painters easily made the switch to works pleasing to the British. Like the Mughal emperors, the European patrons wanted painting that reflected and investigated the natural world.



38 Detail of **Seven Birds**.

Major Events in Mughal History

1494	Accession of Babur, founder of the Mughal dynasty, to the throne of Ferghana, a small principality in Central Asia.
1511	Babur captures Samarkand for the second time (see No. 19).
1526	First Battle of Panipat. Babur occupies Delhi and Agra; the Mughals gain their first foothold in India.
1556	Second Battle of Panipat. Akbar, Babur's grandson, re-establishes the Mughals in northern India after an interregnum of the Sur dynasty.
1558-1600	Akbar expands the Empire by conquest (Gujerat, 1573; Bengal, 1576) and by diplomatic overtures to native Rajput princes. In 1562 Raja Bihari Mal of Amber (Jaipur) becomes the first Rajput prince to ally himself with Akbar, who marries the Raja's daughter and gives his new father-in-law command of 5,000 men in the Mughal army.
1582	Akbar promulgates his Divine Faith, designed to replace the conflicting creeds of Islam and Hinduism with a unifying Indian religion. In the same spirit, Hindu and Muslim artists work together at the Imperial court.
1615	The Rajputs of Mewar, leaders of Rajput resistance to Mughal domination, submit to Emperor Jahangir, Akbar's son.
1636	The Deccani states of Golconda and Bijapur acknowledge the overlordship of the Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan.
1658-1707	Reign of Aurangzeb, a devout Muslim who banned singing and alcohol from the imperial court, disapproved of the art of painting, and antagonized his Rajput allies to the point of revolt by his attempts to impose Islamic sacred law on a predominantly non-Islamic population.
1661	Cession of Bombay to the British East India Company.

1724	Nizam al-Mulk, a member of the Mughal imperial service, forces the Emperor to recognize him as viceroy of the south, thus creating a virtually independent state in the Deccan. Other local rulers begin to act in an independent manner as Mughal authority wanes.
1765	The British East India Company acquires rule of Bengal.
1804	End of Second Anglo-Maratha War. The British occupy Delhi; the Mughal Emperor becomes a puppet of the British East India Company.
1815-25	Most Rajput states enter into treaties of "subordinate cooperation" with the British (Kota, 1817; Jaipur, 1818; Bikaner, 1818; Sirohi, 1823).
1858	End of the Sepoy Mutiny. British India is placed directly under the rule of the Crown. Bahadur Shah, last Mughal Emperor, is exiled to Burma (see No. 29).

Detail of **Babur Receives the Notables of Samarkand after the Second Capture of the City** (see No. 19, page 23).

Suggested Further Reading

W.G. Archer, *The Loves of Krishna*, London: 1957.

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M.S. Randhawa, *Kangra Paintings of the Bhagavata Purana*, New Delhi: 1960.

Walter Spink, *Krishnamandala*, Ann Arbor: 1971.

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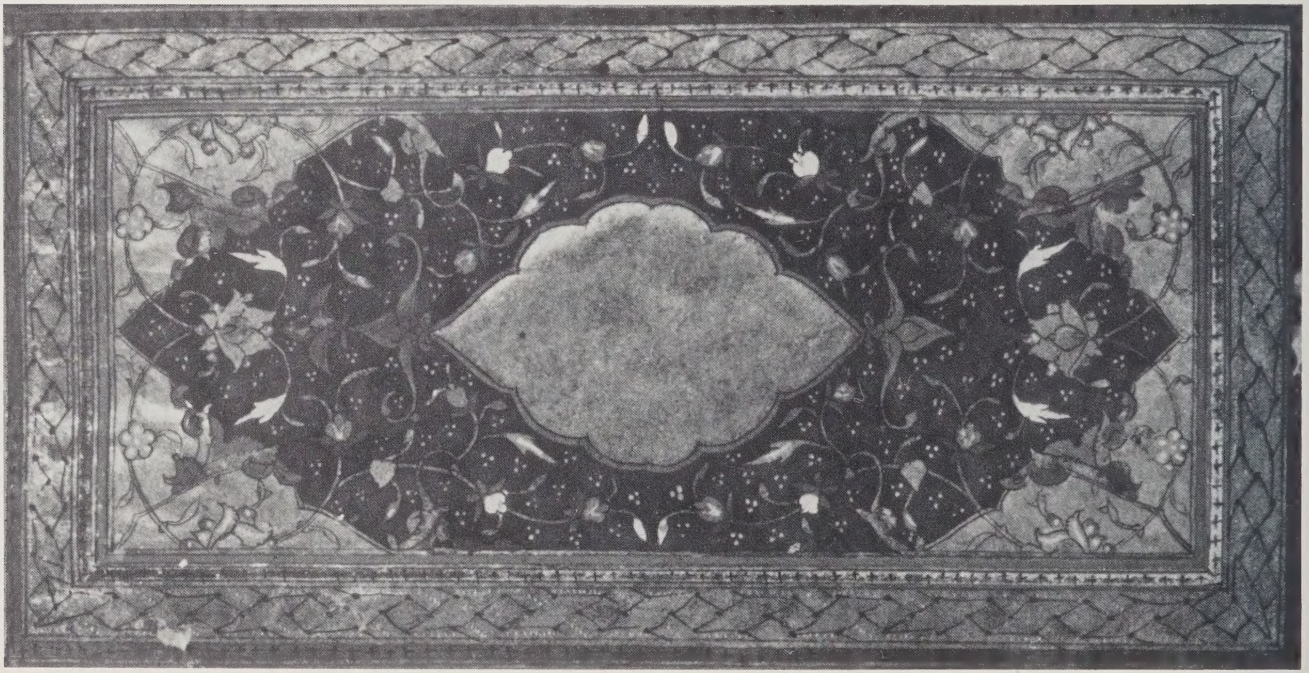

Detail of **Illuminated Chapter Heading** (see No. 15, page 19).

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